

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 (ISO) W

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R 191014Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7971

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T OSLO 1155

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, NO, UK, FR, GW

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER VIEWS EUROPE WITH PESSIMISM

REF: OSLO 1105 NOTAL

1. AT MARCH 13 RESIDENCE MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER, PARTIALLY REPORTED REFTEL, BRATTELI CONCENTRATED MAJOR PORTION OF OUR DISCUSSION, CONDUCTED IN A MOST ANIMATED FASHION FOR HIM, ON THE "SAD CONDITION OF EUROPE." CONVINCED OF THE NEED FOR EVENTUAL EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL UNITY, WHICH WOULD ALSO INCLUDE NORWAY, BRATTELI NOTED HOW APPALLED HE IS AT THE PRESENT STATE OF EUROPE. HE FEARS THAT THE LACK OF LEADERSHIP IS THREATENING TO RESULT IN A SERIOUS FRAGMENTATION. HIS COMMENTS WERE FOCUSED ON GERMANY, FRANCE, AND THE UK WHOSE LEADERS ARE IN THE BEST POSITION TO INFLUENCE POSITIVELY THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.

2. BRATTELI'S COMMENTS ON GERMANY WERE BRIEF BUT SHARP. ACKNOWLEDGING THE SENSITIVITY ITS LEADERSHIP MUST EXERCISE, HE NEVERTHELESS PLACES CONSIDERABLE BLAME ON HIS COUNTRY FOR EUROPE'S PLIGHT BECAUSE OF ITS FAILURE TO DEMONSTRATE STRONGER LEADERSHIP.

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3. CONCERNING FRANCE, WHILE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ITS CURRENT ANTICS BRATTELI ACCEPTS ITS AIM TO PLAY A

PIVOTAL EUROPEAN ROLE, BUT ADMITTED TO CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION CONCERNING ITS TRUE SHORT-TERM INTERESTS AND DESIGNS. HE WILL NOT WRITE FRANCE OFF AS A MAJOR INFLUENCE BECAUSE ITS CIVIL SERVICE IS THE BEST IN EUROPE, IF NOT THE WORLD. THE CIVIL SERVANTS HAVE PROVEN MORE THAN ONCE SINCE THE WAR THAT, IN SPITE OF THEIR POLITICAL LEADERS' MACHINATIONS AND SQUABBLES, THEY CAN KEEP THE COUNTRY FROM ECONOMIC DISASTER AND SO, WITH ECONOMIC FOOTING, CONTINUE TO GUARANTEE FRANCE A PROMINENT EUROPEAN ROLE.

4. HIS MOST BARBED REMARKS WERE SAVED FOR THE BRITISH, PARTICULARLY THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, HAROLD WILSON. NOTING HIS ECONOMIC ADVISER HAD GIVEN HIM DATA THAT VERY DAY SHOWING THE BRITISH WORKER 40 PERCENT LESS PRODUCTIVE THAN MOST EUROPEANS, HE EXPRESSED STRONG RESERVATIONS ABOUT BRITAIN'S ABILITY TO REMAIN A MAJOR EUROPEAN INFLUENCE. HIS LENGTHY REMARKS ABOUT WILSON CAN BE SUMMARIZED IN BRATTELI'S OWN WORDS, "NO CREDIBILITY." BRATTELI, WHOSE INTEGRITY IS PROBABLY HIS MOST PROMINENT VIRTUE, ALSO EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT WITH FINANCE MINISTER HEALEY AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHALLAGHAN FOR THEIR FACILITY IN SHIFTING THEIR GROUNDS FOR POLITICALLY EXPEDIENT REASONS, PARTICULARLY IN REFERENCE TO EUROPE AND THE COMMON MARKET.

5. AS FOR NORWAY, BRATTELI BELIEVES THAT -- DESPITE THE PROBLEMS OF RULING WITH A MINORITY GOVERNMENT -- THE NEAR-TERM PROSPECTS PROMISE STABILITY. INFLATION IS HIS CHIEF CONCERN. TO KEEP INFLATION WITHIN MANAGEABLE BOUNDS, HE IS RELYING ON THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF "A STRONG, RESPONSIBLE UNION LEADERSHIP" TO MODERATE WAGE DEMANDS. HE NOTED THOUGH THAT EVEN WITHIN THE TWO-WEEK PERIOD SINCE WE LAST DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE, HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE UNION LEADERS' ABILITY TO CONTROL WAGE DEMANDS HAS BEEN SLIGHTLY ERODED DUE TO THE EVER-RISING COSTS OF LIVING, FUELED IN LARGE PART BY RISING COSTS OF IMPORTS.

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NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O - ELTZ.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974OSLO01155
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740071-0255
From: OSLO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740332/aaaabeex.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: OSLO 1105 NOTAL
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 APR 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <31 JAN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER VIEWS EUROPE WITH PESSIMISM
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, NO, UK, FR, GE, (BRATTELI, TRYGVE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005